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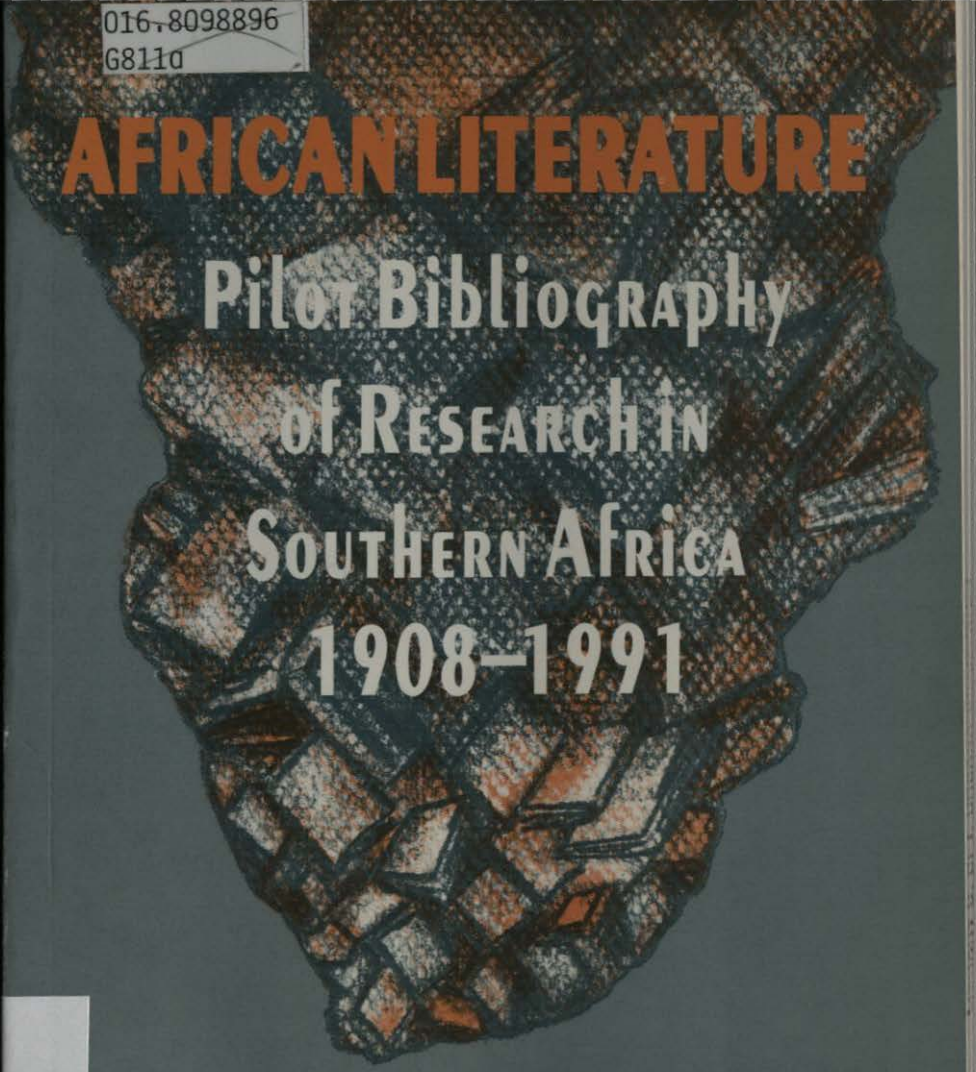
AFRICAN LITERATURE

Pilot Bibliography of Research in Southern Africa 1908–1991



Compiled by

G M M Grobler & E M Briers

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STUDIA COMPOSITA 17
UNISA 1993

African Literature : Pilot Bibliography of Research in Southern Africa 1908 –1991

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G M M Grobler
and E M Briers

University of South Africa
Pretoria

AL 016.8098896 AFX IAS Ref.
8011 G&Ha
G76
1993

©1993 University of South Africa
First edition, first impression

ISBN 0 86981 802 3

House editor and cover design:
Hetta Oosthuizen

Printed by Sigma Press
Koedoespoort

Published by the
University of South Africa
PO Box 392, 0001 Pretoria

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Contents

Preface ix

Compilers' note xiii

GENERAL

Bibliographies 1
Books/Articles 2
Modern: Prose 22
Modern: Drama 23
Modern: Poetry 23
Traditional: General 24
Traditional: Folktales 26
Traditional: Praise poetry 27
Traditional: Drama 29
Traditional: Proverbs 30
Traditional: Riddles 30

NGUNI

General 31
Traditional: Praise poetry 31
Traditional: Folktales 32

ZULU 32
Bibliographies 32
Book reviews 33
General 39
Modern: Prose 42
Modern: Drama 44
Modern: Poetry 45

African

Traditional: Praise poetry . . . 46
Traditional: Folktales . . . 49
Traditional: Proverbs . . . 52
Traditional: Riddles . . . 52

XHOSA . . . 53
Bibliographies . . . 53
Book reviews . . . 54
General . . . 58
Modern: Prose . . . 65
Modern: Drama . . . 67
Modern: Poetry . . . 67
Traditional: Praise poetry . . . 68
Traditional: Folktales . . . 70
Traditional: Riddles . . . 72

SWATI . . . 72
Book reviews . . . 72
Traditional: Praise poetry . . . 73

NDEBELE . . . 73
Bibliographies . . . 73
Book reviews . . . 74
General . . . 74
Traditional: Praise poetry . . . 74
Traditional: Proverbs . . . 75
Traditional: Riddles . . . 75

SOTHO

General . . . 76
Modern: Poetry . . . 76
Traditional: Folktales . . . 76

SOUTHERN SOTHO . . . 77
Bibliographies . . . 77
Book reviews . . . 77
General . . . 83
Modern: Prose . . . 86
Modern: Drama . . . 91
Modern: Poetry . . . 93
Traditional: Praise poetry . . . 95
Traditional: Folktales . . . 96
Traditional: Riddles . . . 97

NORTHERN SOTHO . . . 97
Bibliographies . . . 97
Book reviews . . . 98
General . . . 101
Modern: Prose . . . 103
Modern: Drama . . . 107
Modern: Poetry . . . 107
Traditional: Praise poetry . . . 110
Traditional: Folktales . . . 111
Traditional: Proverbs . . . 111
Traditional: Riddles . . . 112

TSWANA . . . 113
Bibliographies . . . 113
Book reviews (In English/Afrikaans) . . . 113
Book reviews (In Tswana) . . . 116
General . . . 116
Modern: Prose . . . 118
Modern: Drama . . . 119
Modern: Poetry . . . 120
Traditional: Praise poetry . . . 120
Traditional: Folktales . . . 121
Traditional: Proverbs/Idioms . . . 121
Traditional: Riddles . . . 122

TSONGA

Bibliographies . . . 123
Book reviews . . . 123
General . . . 125
Modern: Prose . . . 127
Modern: Drama . . . 127
Modern: Poetry . . . 127
Traditional: Poetry . . . 127
Traditional: Folktales . . . 128
Traditional: Proverbs/Idioms . . . 128
Traditional: Riddles . . . 129

VENDA

Bibliographies . . . 130
Book reviews . . . 130
General . . . 132
Modern: Prose . . . 133
Modern: Drama . . . 133

Modern: Poetry 133
Traditional: Proverbs 134
Traditional: Riddles 134

☐ **SHONA**

Book reviews 135
General 135
Modern: Prose 136
Modern: Drama 137
Modern: Poetry 137
Traditional: Poetry 137
Traditional: Praise poetry 138
Traditional: Folktales 138

☐ **NAME INDEX** 139

☐ Preface

The appearance of this *African literature: Pilot bibliography of research in southern Africa 1908–1991* marks the partial yet crucial fulfilment of a long-felt need – the development of an infrastructure that will facilitate research on the literatures of the region.

The need was identified in 1981 by Professor Albert Gérard during his keynote address at the 1st Biennial International Conference of the African Language Association of Southern Africa (ALASA) held in Potchefstroom (Gérard, 1982:9). This was taken up as a formal proposal in a paper I delivered on 'Comparative and limited projects and investigations of larger scope into African literatures' in October 1982, during a research symposium organised by the Centre for South African Literature Research (CENSAL) at the Human Sciences Research Council, held at Unisa. Papers read at the symposium were published in *Literature Research SA Letterkundenavorsing* (Malan, 1984). Among the twelve projects proposed in the paper, the Bibliography appeared as the first, with the provisional title of 'Comprehensive Bibliography of Research on Southern African Vernacular Literatures' (Malan, 1984:104).

At the suggestion of Professor D. B. Ntuli, the proposals were referred to an *ad hoc* committee consisting of representatives of ALASA and CENSAL, which at its first meeting on 5 September 1983, gave the go-ahead for their implementation.

With financial assistance from the Department of African Languages at the University of South Africa and ALASA, Mrs E. M. Briers, at the time

an honours student, was recruited on a part-time basis to begin the work. Mrs Briers worked diligently and her thorough consultation of available information networks soon indicated that the task would be more time consuming than foreseen. Due to financial constraints, Mrs Briers's own circumstances, and various other factors during the late 1980s, she had to terminate her work and the project virtually came to a standstill. It was only towards the end of 1990 that the Committee succeeded in recruiting the services of Professor G. M. M. Grobler. He devoted the greater part of his 1991 sabbatical to the project and thus work was resumed in earnest once again.

Professor Grobler computerised Mrs Briers's 70-page draft, added more than half of the existing entries, edited the entire manuscript, and provided a table of contents as well as an extensive name index. Financial assistance, again from Unisa's Department of African Languages, enabled him to visit several prominent South African libraries to verify and supplement existing entries. The result is now in the reader's hands, and thus available to present and prospective users at home and abroad.

A bibliographer's task is not an easy one, more so on a subject as multifaceted as this one (as the table of contents testifies), and on literatures which, until very recently, were treated as the step-children of African studies in the region. Studies, therefore, were destined to appear in unpublished masters' dissertations, doctoral theses, scientific journals, their supplements and book discussion columns, or other ephemeral publications, with the limited readership this implied.

For this reason the compilers should be congratulated on their achievement. Although not a value judgement per se, the Bibliography will most certainly refute views on the obscurity of the African language literatures of the region and scholarly studies on them. No doubt it could be argued that the output could have been doubled, or that it could have been more extensive; yet a crucial start has been made and research is likely to grow in quantity as well as in erudition, especially when forthcoming researchers acquaint themselves with the contents of the studies listed in this Bibliography.

On behalf of the ALASA/CENSAL Research Committee (CENSAL was dissolved in 1990 following rationalisation at the HSRC), I take great pleasure in welcoming this publication as an addition to the small, yet valuable, body of reference books available to the African studies fraternity. My sincere thanks to Mrs Briers who started the project, and to Professor Gerrie Grobler who left no stone unturned to see the project through to its final stage. Present and forthcoming users will join the Research Committee in its appreciation of their formidable contribution to the fulfilment of its ideals. *Šatee*! Likewise we would like to thank the Publication Committee of Unisa for the generous investment in furthering the scholarly study of the literatures of our region. The Department of African Languages of Unisa and the now disbanded CENSAL also deserve our gratitude.

The project was cleared by the late Dr H. J. Aschenborn, Director of the State Library at the time. To ALASA and its Board (the project was approved under the chairmanship of Professor D. P. Lombard), I would like to express my thanks for providing such a comprehensive frame of reference, such an ideal to work for, such an opportunity to serve, and the joy of fulfilment. *Tsena ke dinyane, dīholo di sa tla*! (This is only the beginning, great things are still to come.)

Prof C. F. Swanepoel
Chairman, ALASA/CENSAL Research Committee
Pretoria, 22 June 1992

1194 Opland, J. 1981. "Shona oral poetry." *Zambezia*, vol. 9, pp. 59–65.

☐ Traditional: Praise poetry

1195 Fortune, G. 1976. *Shona praise poetry*. DLitt, University of Cape Town.

1196 Fortune, G. 1984. "Some recurrent structures in Shona praise poetry." *African Studies*, vol. 43, no. 2, pp. 161–169.

1197 Hodza, A. C. and Fortune, G. (eds.) 1979. *Shona praise poetry*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 401 pp. [Reviewed by Wandile Kuse in *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 13 (1982), no. 4, pp. 560–567.]

☐ Traditional: Folktales

1198 Kriel, A. P. 1971. *An African horizon*. Rondebosch, Cape Town: Permanent Publishing House. 247 pp.

■ NAME INDEX

The figures indicate the entry numbers.

Numbers marked with * refer to *secondary authors*, i.e. editors or compilers of sources which may contain the contributions of primary authors.

Numbers marked with ** refer to *reviewers* of scientific works/articles.

The symbol # marks entries in which the relevant name either appears in the title or is the subject of a publication.

Authors of reviewed literary works (cf. Book reviews) have not been considered for this purpose.

☐ A

Abraham, J. H. 9
Ainslie, J. (Jill) 454
Andrzejewski, B. W. 10
Anon 463, 662, 667, 721, 857, 996, 1023
Apter, A. H. 230
Argyle, J. 322*, 435*
Armah, A. K. (Ayi Kwei) 752
Arnold, S. (Stephen) 581*
Attwell, D. (David) 753
Awoonor, K. (Kofi) 11
Azikiwe, B. N. (Ben Nnamdi) 668

☐ B

Bang, D. N. 323
Barber, K. (Karin) 217**
Baumbach, E. J. M. 12*, 182, 205*, 391*
Baumbach, J. 1000